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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development
and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
review of the relevant United Nations plans and programmes
of action pertaining to the situation of social groups:
modalities for review and appraisal of the Madrid
International Plan of Action on Ageing**

Modalities for the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present note addresses the role of the Commission for Social Development in integrating the different dimensions of population ageing in its work and the modalities for the review and appraisal of the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, 2002. The subject of ageing as a cross-cutting theme is underscored, paying particular attention to the need to integrate ageing into the Commission's work and into the broader agendas of the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly and other relevant functional commissions. A system-wide and coordinated follow-up to the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing is proposed in the form of a bottom-up and flexible approach in order to better address the Madrid objectives. The Commission as the intergovernmental platform for global review and appraisal is called on to play a crucial role, as population ageing becomes a pressing issue in the decades ahead. In this regard, a number of recommendations (in boldface) are presented to the Commission throughout this note.

* E/CN.5/2003/1.

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Introduction

1. The present note has been prepared in order to facilitate discussions in the Commission for Social Development as the intergovernmental body responsible for the follow-up and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002.¹ Specifically, it addresses paragraph 132 of the Madrid Plan of Action in which States requested the Commission to integrate the different dimensions of population ageing in its work and to consider the modalities for the review and appraisal of the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing as soon as possible. Furthermore, the General Assembly, in its resolution 57/167 of 18 December 2002, invited the Commission to consider those modalities at its forty-first session in 2003.

I. Role of the Commission for Social Development in the review and appraisal of the Second World Assembly on Ageing

A. Integration of population ageing

2. In response to the request by Member States to integrate the different dimensions of population ageing in its work, **the Commission for Social Development is invited to apply an ageing perspective in the consideration of the priority themes pertaining to the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, and in its regular review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups, including youth in the context of intergenerational solidarity, persons with disabilities, and families.** However, the requirement of integration involves more than the remit of the Commission, whose work in social development is also addressed by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, which in turn influence, and are influenced by, other processes. In this regard, it is worth noting that the Council, in its agreed conclusions 2002/1,² determined that it “should seek to identify themes, inter alia, on new and evolving issues” (para. 6). **The Commission may wish to propose to the Council the theme of ageing as one of these new and emerging issues for consideration at the Council’s coordination segment.**³

3. The report of the Secretary-General on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcome of the major United Nations conferences (A/57/75-E/2002/57), calls attention to the three-tiered system for reviewing conferences, comprising the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the relevant functional commissions, and underscores this system’s role and overall responsibility in the follow-up, coordination and implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations conferences. It follows that the integration of population ageing should go beyond the work of the Commission for Social Development. **The Commission should play an active role in promoting such integration into the work of the other functional commissions, the Council and the Assembly.** This effort could be akin to such endeavours as mainstreaming gender and human rights, which have been pursued by the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights.

4. In the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change” (A/57/387 and Corr.1), ageing is highlighted in section II.A entitled “Aligning activities with priorities”. According to the report: “We must also prepare for the shift that has already started in the relative proportions of young people and the aged in most parts of the world and its implications for the labour force, social services and political processes” (para. 39). In view of this, the subject of ageing was recently addressed at the meeting of the High-level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, which called for a strengthening of focal points on ageing within the United Nations system and for closer coordination of relevant activities in the context of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action.

5. Issues related to ageing and older persons are progressively being pursued in the context of other global processes, but they are still far from attaining the profile called for in the Madrid Plan of Action. They were taken up by some extent at both the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development⁴ addresses the role of pension schemes as a source of social protection as well as of savings and resources for development;⁵ and the Johannesburg summit outcome recognized the role of holders of traditional knowledge and practices — who are typically community elders — and called for their effective participation in decision- and policy-making.

6. The inclusion of all population groups in the evolving global development framework is one of the keys to achieving the millennium development goals, which affirm the long-term imperative of eradicating poverty and fulfilling the social and humanitarian goals set by the global conferences of the 1990s. Thus, the role of older persons needs to be addressed in the processes of follow-up to the United Nations Millennium Declaration⁶ and, particularly, in the context of the eradication of poverty through, for example, their continuing productive activities in their communities and society at large, their caring for grandchildren in the household while the parents are working, and their caring for orphaned grandchildren whose parents have died of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

B. Follow-up aspects

7. The Madrid Plan of Action has placed a new issue of global significance in the international policy agenda. In the words of the Secretary-General, ageing is “a silent revolution ... that extends well beyond demographics, with major economic, social, cultural, psychological and spiritual implications”.⁷ The Commission for Social Development therefore has a crucial role to play in ensuring that the implications of this silent revolution become widely known and are effectively addressed. In the decades ahead, population ageing will be an extremely pressing issue for all countries, be they developed, developing or in transition. Its ramifications are manifold. As noted by the Secretary-General at Madrid: “Ageing is definitely no longer just a ‘first world issue’. What was a footnote in the twentieth century is on its way to becoming a dominant theme in the twenty-first century.”⁸ Follow-up to Madrid is therefore a major challenge.

8. In its resolution 57/270 of 20 December 2002 on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, the General Assembly reaffirmed the need to strengthen the role of the Economic and Social Council as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination and thus to promote coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related fields.

9. Additionally, in its agreed conclusions 2002/1 on strengthening further the Economic and Social Council, building on its recent achievements, to help it fulfil the role ascribed to it in the Charter of the United Nations as contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration,⁹ the Council called for a coordinated and integrated follow-up to commitments agreed at major United Nations conferences (para. 5), and decided, *inter alia*, that its functional commissions should enhance their role as the main forums for expert follow-up and review of United Nations conferences and summits (para. 13), and should identify cross-cutting policy issues, gaps/overlaps and areas of complementarity and cooperation, and focus on substantive issues (para. 19).

10. In view of the above, the Commission should be seen as the key intergovernmental platform for enhancing policy coherence in the area of ageing and for elevating the priority of ageing-related issues among stakeholders and global partners. Issues related to ageing cut across all policies. This was reinforced at the Second World Assembly, which affirmed the necessary first step in implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action: to mainstream ageing and the concerns of older persons into national development frameworks and poverty eradication strategies (para. 116).

11. The Commission's role in the follow-up, as set out by the Economic and Social Council, has become even more important for the Commission in light of the Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, adopted by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Ministerial Conference on Ageing, held in Berlin from 11 to 13 September 2002 (ECE/AC.23/2002/2/Rev.6), whose follow-up process was made contingent on what would be decided at the Commission. Regional involvement and engagement in the follow-up to Madrid are essential if we are to be successful in making the Madrid Plan of Action operational. The Commission's ability to define a follow-up process becomes, therefore, even more imperative.

III. Modalities for the follow-up and review of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002

12. As stated in the Madrid Plan of Action, successful implementation requires sustained action at all levels involving Governments — which have the primary responsibility — and other stakeholders in order to respond to the demographic changes ahead and to mobilize the skills and energies of older persons (para. 114). Review of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action will require efficient use of networks, partnerships, and other consultation machineries to unveil critical, timely and relevant information from the ground up.

A. Review and appraisal from the bottom up

13. The central idea behind the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action is to move away from a “top-down” approach. This review and appraisal proposal calls for a “bottom-up” approach that would allow the intergovernmental deliberative process to benefit from carefully considered assessments of whether or not the Madrid objectives are being achieved at local, national, subregional and regional levels. This approach entails the gathering of information through sharing of ideas, data collection, and best practices, and is designed to ensure that the review and appraisal, when carried out, remain as close as possible to the level at which the issues arise. A review of this kind would produce a more pertinent outcome, both in the narrower sense of bringing local concerns to the global level, thereby supplementing policy needs, and in the broader sense of keeping stakeholders socially and politically engaged.

14. The all-encompassing nature of population ageing demands that the review and appraisal of implementation should engage Governments, and the United Nations system, as well as civil society. The process proposed here would involve open-ended dialogues, meetings and forums with various stakeholders at local levels in as well as outside of government, and in partnership and coordination with national actors. The findings of these local gatherings would be consolidated at the subregional and regional levels.

15. The introduction of a regional dimension to the review and appraisal process is indeed critical, in that it serves as a bridge between national and global considerations. **Regional entities, most notably the regional commissions and their intergovernmental bodies, should play an active role in assessing the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action by networking with their member countries, national committees and other stakeholders in the exchange of information and the gathering and compiling of data and research findings.**

16. Interlinkage of ageing with all the relevant issues, including poverty, employment and social protection, gender, health, education and environment, should be taken into account. For their part, United Nations bodies, inter alia, through the use of local field offices, can contribute within their particular areas of expertise. For example, the International Labour Organization (ILO) can make specialized contributions with regard to employment and social protection affecting older persons; the World Health Organization (WHO) concerning healthy ageing and lifelong development; and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on rural ageing and development. Civil society organizations, many of which have substantial experience in ageing and development, should also be actively engaged. Stakeholders from the non-governmental, academic and scientific community bring experience and insight, integral features of any successful outcome. The fact that their constituents are often spread over urban and rural districts, and local, national and regional borders, and their mandates are multifaceted, makes them a valuable resource for information-gathering.

17. Overall, the cumulative impact of partnerships with civil society in this proposed review and appraisal process would be considerable, and would have the potential to provide a richer context and deeper understanding of the issues. As pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change: “To bring about change today, it is necessary

to mobilize the support, and cultivate the ideas, of a diverse network of non-State actors” (para. 11). Today, a major United Nations gathering without the involvement of civil society in all its various forms is scarcely imaginable” (para. 12).

B. Global outcome

18. As the bottom-up approach to the review and appraisal makes its way up from the local level, via the national and subregional levels, to the regional level, its culmination will take place at the global level — through the Commission for Social Development. Rather than exercise a solely prescriptive role in the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action, the Commission could function as the recipient of ideas, lessons of experience and policy advice from those directly involved in implementing the Madrid Plan of Action. It is foreseen that the content of such a review would be far richer and more useful than what could be obtained through survey reviews.

19. It is envisaged that the Commission will provide the forum in which stakeholder representatives would present and elaborate their findings. This could be conducted in a symposium, for example, with the results to be presented in the form of a resolution or a chairman’s summary. **The Commission is invited to consider this flexible approach to the review and appraisal and to reach an understanding on the format of the substantive outcome.**

20. In this regard, **the Commission may wish to consider a review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action every four or five years. In identifying the themes or issues for review, it may adhere to the priority directions and recommendations in the Madrid Plan of Action. The three priority directions — ageing and development; advancing health and well-being into old age; and ensuring enabling and supportive environments — produced 18 issues and 239 recommendations. In order to accommodate the complexity and diversity of the issues and recommendations, the Commission may wish to adopt the approach to the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action described above.**

C. Role of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat

21. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat will serve as facilitator in this review process. This would include preparation of materials for a review strategy, advocacy and information dissemination and exchange. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs could develop, under the guidance of the Commission, guidelines for the review of the Madrid Plan of Action — the principal instrument against which progress will be appraised. It would also work closely with the Bureau of the Commission in planning, organizing and implementing the symposium.

Notes

- ¹ *Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8-12 April 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.IV.4), chap. I, resolutions 1, annex II.
- ² See A/57/3 (Part II), chap. V, sect. A, para. 9.
- ³ In its agreed conclusions 1995/1 (see *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth session, Supplement No. 3 (A/50/3/Rev.1)*, chap. III, sect. A, para. 22), the Economic and Social Council determined that each year, within the framework of its coordination segment, it would carry out a review of cross-cutting themes related to the follow-up of the major conferences of the 1990s. At that time, the issue of ageing was not included among those themes. See also, in this regard, document E/2002/62, para. 21.
- ⁴ *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 18.
- ⁶ See General Assembly resolution 55/2.
- ⁷ See press release SG/SM/6727-SOC/4474, of 30 September 1998.
- ⁸ See the address by the Secretary-General to the Second World Assembly on Ageing SOC/M/3, of 8 April 2002 (<http://www.un.org/ageing/coverage/pr/socm3.htm>). Accessed on 2 January 2003; his statement may also be found in *Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8-12 April 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.IV.4), annex II.
- ⁹ See A/57/3 (Part II), chap. V, sect. A, para. 9.
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